



Veterans' Affairs Committee
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Veterans' Affairs Committee

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Veterans' Affairs Committee was called to order by Norman Ross, Chairman, on Wednesday, January 13, 2010, at 7:00 p.m., in the Mayor and Council Chambers, City Hall, 255 W. Alameda St., Tucson, Arizona.

1. Call to Order/Establish a Quorum

Members Present:

Ernest Minchella
Cathi Starr
William Stein
Norman Ross
Ferdinando Leon Jr.
Vern Pall
Saul Stoltz
E. Wendell Hague
Daniel Ross

Members Absent:

Abel Moreno
Teri Davis
Roger Smith
Herbert Rogers

Others Present:

Pepe Mendoza
Paul Marsh
Daniel Morelos
Dee Brunner
Jeff Brunner
Pat Anderson
Vic Ferrara

Representing:

American Legion Post #36
AZ. Dept. of Veterans' Services
DAV Auxiliary Cactus #2
Korean War Veterans' Association
Marine Corps League, Marana Night Hawk 72
Military Officers Association of America
Tucson Jewish War Veterans Post 201
VFW Post #549
Vietnam Veterans of America, Ch. 106

Representing:

American Legion Post #7
Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America
DAV Cactus Chapter #2
Spanish Trail Chapter NCOA

So. AZ VA Healthcare System
Tucson Cemetery Group
Tucson Airport Authority
Tucson Airport Authority
Spouse and Volunteer
Korean War Veteran
Support Our Wounded Troops & Families

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Norman Ross.

3. Invocation

The invocation was given by Ferdinando Leon.

4. Introduction of Guests

Guests Pepe Mendoza, Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System, Paul Marsh, Tucson Cemetery Group, Dan Morelos and Dee Brunner, Tucson Airport Authority, Dee's spouse Jeff Brunner, Pat Anderson and Vic Ferrara were introduced to the committee. Vic Ferrara presented the members with information regarding Operation Transition Warriors a program sponsored by American Legion Riders of Arizona to assist wounded veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. He asked the committee to help spread the word regarding Operation Transition Warriors.

5. Approval of New Members

It was moved, duly seconded and passed by a vote of 9 to 0 (Abel Moreno, Teri Davis, Roger Smith and Herbert Rogers absent/excused) to approve Paul Marsh representing the Tucson Veterans Cemetery Group and Dan Morelos representing the Tucson Airport Authority, as new members.

6. Chairman's Report on Current Events: For the Good of the Order

Chairman Ross reported that on June 25, 2010 there would be a commemorative ceremony of the sixtieth anniversary of the start of the Korean War held in Phoenix at Wesley Bolin Memorial Park where the Korean War Memorial was located. He said, as part of that commemoration, the Korean War Museum in Springfield, Illinois would provide a traveling photographic display during the month of June to interested locations in Phoenix and Tucson. He said some of the pictures of the battle scenes were very moving. He added he would ask the City Clerk's Office if a display could be placed in City Hall. He asked Pepe Mendoza of the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System if the hospital would be interested in displaying the photographs. Mr. Mendoza said a letter would need to be sent to the Director for permission to have the display. He mentioned that such photographs could cause flashback problems for some of the veterans, so that could influence the decision.

Cathi Starr said that a veteran had donated a 1968 map of Vietnam to her office. She said they were now interested in locating Gulf War or Korean War maps to add to a display at the Arizona Department of Veterans Services. She asked members to let her know of any available maps.

7. Approval of Minutes – December 9, 2009

It was moved, duly seconded and passed by a voice vote of 9 to 0 (Abel Moreno, Teri Davis, Roger Smith and Herbert Rogers absent/excused) to approve the minutes of December 9, 2009 as presented.

8. Discussion / Action Regarding Operation Exodus 2009

Chairman Ross stated there was excellent response to Operation Exodus. He asked committee members to view the list of volunteers who participated and asked them to inform him if anyone had been inadvertently left off the list. The list would be submitted to Colonel Tom Miller at Fort Huachuca in anticipation of an awards ceremony.

Dee Brunner reported that all leftover goodie bags from the event were later given out to troops returning from leave. She said it would have been nice if bottled water had been available. Chairman Ross said he did not know what went wrong because Kalil Bottling was supposed to provide some water, but they did not show. Ernie Minchella said he would be happy to speak to them for the next Operation Exodus, as he knew the Kalils personally.

Saul Stoltz mentioned that he thought the young soldiers enjoyed having someone to talk to while they waited for their flights.

9. Discussion / Action Regarding the Four Chaplains Ceremony

Chairman Ross reported he had been in touch with Chaplain Zinck and Dr. Martin Dresner regarding the Four Chaplains Ceremony to let them know there was a gentleman, Leo Falk, living in Phoenix who would come to speak. Mr. Falk had first hand experience with two survivors of the U. S. S. Dorchester incident while he was stationed in Greenland. One survivor enlisted Mr. Falk to help write the story of the Four Chaplains. Since then he had been telling the story about the Four Chaplains. He said the ceremony would take place at 1:30 p.m. on February 21, 2010 at the R. E. Lindsey Auditorium at the VA Hospital.

Pepe Mendoza said Veterans Organizations would have the opportunity to lay wreaths in front of the stage area, and he asked them to please notify him or Chaplain Zinck if they wished to participate. He said stands would be permitted. He also informed the committee that the Sixth Avenue gate would be open for the ceremony and parking would be provided in lot Q. Fernando Leon asked if they had a color guard scheduled for the ceremony. He said his organization, the Marine Corps League Marana Night Hawk 72 Detachment, was newly chartered and he thought their color guard would like to participate. Mr. Mendoza encouraged him to call Chaplain Zinck to let him know of the organization's interest. Wendell Hague asked what the code of dress should be for the ceremony. Chairman Ross said he thought a shirt and tie with maybe a jacket would be appropriate, as it was a solemn event. He also encouraged members to wear their organization caps.

10. Discussion / Action Regarding a Commemorative Plaque for the Four Chaplains

Chairman Ross suggested the committee consider a bronze or brass plaque about twenty four inches by eighteen inches with the picture of the four chaplains, their names, the date of the event, and the ship's name. Wendell Hague asked if he had a craft person in mind to do the work. Mr. Ross stated that community support and pricing needed to be researched. Ernie Minchella suggested they approach the memorial parks to see who provided some of their plaques. Mr. Hague said he thought the item should be carried forward each meeting until it was concluded.

It was moved, duly seconded, and passed by a voice vote of 9 to 0, (Abel Moreno, Teri Davis, Roger Smith and Herbert Rogers absent/excused) to include the item on each month's agenda until completed.

11. Discussion / Action Regarding the Veterans Patient Programs Annual Golf Tournament

Wendell Hague announced the eighth annual golf tournament, hosted by American Legion Post 36, to benefit patient programs at the Tucson VA Health Care System would be held June 6, 2010 at Del Lago Country Club. He said the tournament had raised between eight and ten thousand dollars in past years and went toward programs and services that were not provided for in the annual VA budget, including some therapy programs, recreation and entertainment programs and comfort items. Information was included in the committee's meeting materials and questions could be directed to Nils Nilsen, Tournament Chairman. Mr. Hague asked members to endorse and help promote the tournament. He said he thought colored informational posters were available for organizations' bulletin boards.

12. Committee Reports – Discussion/Action

a. Airport Military Lounge

Dee Brunner of the Tucson Airport Authority said they had been keeping track and had a fair amount of visitors to the Military Lounge. She informed the committee that there was still a need for volunteers as there were openings on Monday, January 25 and some Sundays. Ms. Brunner said they still had a few snacks left but were in need of some

beverages such as juice packets. Chairman Ross encouraged committee members to join the volunteers at the airport. Ferdinando Leon offered two of his personal storage containers for storing snacks if needed.

b. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Cathi Starr of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services announced the groundbreaking ceremony for the Tucson Veterans Home, to be located at the VA Hospital, would take place on March 19, 2010. Chairman Ross said that he had spoken with Colonel Joey Strickland and was told the home would have four private apartments dedicated to combat veterans and be a new model for skilled nursing facilities.

Ms. Starr also distributed a new contact list for the southern Arizona offices, as there had been some changes, and provided information regarding federal dollars entering into the Arizona economy as a direct result of each veteran living in the State. She presented information regarding the second annual Arizona Military Women's Conference to be held May 21 and 22, 2010, where women could learn more about benefits earned through their military service.

Chairman Ross added that the Arizona Veterans Home in Phoenix had passed inspection by the U.S. Government, which was impressive, as many others had not passed. He complimented Colonel Strickland's office.

c. V A Hospital

Pepe Mendoza provided information regarding upcoming events taking place at the hospital, including the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition on February 24, 2010 which would be held in the Auditorium and open to the public. Also being held in the R. E. Lindsey Jr. Auditorium on January 19, 2010 was the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday celebration. He distributed flyers for the U. S. Veterans Guide to Your Personal Success (GPS) Camp to be held May 25 through 29, 2010 at the University of Arizona. It would be for qualified disabled U. S. Veterans looking to pursue academics and wheelchair athletics and would be free for those selected to attend. Also presented was a Veterans Administration News Release regarding changes to benefits and programs in effect for 2010. Mr. Mendoza passed out information on health care reform and the cost of living adjustment provided by Congressman Raul Grijalva's Office.

Mr. Mendoza announced Fox 11 would cover the University of Arizona's Soccer team visiting the patients in VA Hospital's Community Living Center on January 14, and Channel 13 featured a program on the challenges faced by returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom soldiers returning to college telecast over the Christmas holiday. He also reported that out of all the Welcome Home Events taking place around the country, Tucson's was one out of only three selected for a program that went out nationally to the Department of Defense and the Pentagon on the world Wide TV Channel recently.

d. Arizona DES Employment Administration Veterans' Employment Services

No report was given.

e. Financial Report

Wendell Hague presented the committee's financial report through December 31, 2009 and the Operation Exodus 2009 expenditure report. It was moved, duly seconded, and passed by a voice vote of 9 to 0 (Abel Moreno, Teri Davis, Roger Smith and Herbert Rogers absent/excused) to accept the report as presented.

Mr. Hague reminded the committee that Chairman Ross and Senior Vice Chair Vern Pall would audit the financial reports after the meeting and a statement of that audit would be forwarded to the City Clerk's Office.

13. Future Agenda Items

- Korean War Commemoration
- Tucson Veterans Cemetery

14. Salute to Colors

The Salute to Colors was led by Daniel Ross.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.